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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 ISLAMABAD 003534

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SUBJECT: MUSHARRAF AND SENATOR DURBIN DISCUSS WAR ON
TERROR, EXTREMISM

Classified By: Anne W. Patterson, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: Senator Durbin called on President Musharraf August 7 to discuss Pakistan's role in the war on terror, the state of Islamic extremism in Pakistan, relations with the U.S., and education in Pakistan, particularly in religious schools. Senator Durbin recognized Pakistan had been America's strong partner in the war on terrorism but outlined concerns in the U.S. about extremists in Pakistan's tribal areas, particularly noting the increase in attacks on the Afghan border. Senator Durbin strongly condemned the statements of Congressman Tom Tancredo. Musharraf admitted that the arrangement with the tribes had collapsed but defended the actions of Pakistan's military, particularly its recent attacks in Mir Ali. He said his security forces were taking heavy losses, even though the anti-terrorism effort was not popular in parts of Pakistan. Musharraf expressed his concern about recent legislation in the Congress which would "condition" assistance to Pakistan. He updated Senator Durbin on girls' education and reform of the religious schools. End summary.

¶2. (C) Senator Richard Durbin, accompanied by the Ambassador, and two members of Senator Durbin's staff, Christopher Homan and Paul Farnan, called on President Musharraf at Army House in Karachi August 7. Senator Durbin recalled that he had first met President Musharraf in 2002 and had also had the pleasure of meeting the President's brother, a long-time doctor in Chicago.

¶3. (C) Senator Durbin praised Pakistan's role as a U.S. partner in the war on terror. He had observed there was considerable political turmoil with the upcoming debate in the Pakistani assembly about foreign policy and relations with the U.S. President Musharraf replied that some of this turmoil had been triggered by the criticism of Pakistan in the National Intelligence Estimate as well as by statements about unilateral military strikes in Pakistan. Senator Durbin said there was concern in the U.S. Congress about a resurgence of extremism in the tribal areas and particularly about the increase in cross-border attacks against NATO (read American) forces in Afghanistan. Senator Durbin strongly condemned Congressman Tom Tancredo's irresponsible statements about the possibility of an attack on Islam's holy cities.

¶4. (C) Musharraf observed that while he could understand the "political overtones" of such statements in the U.S., they were badly received in Pakistan. He was satisfied with the

Pakistani Army's efforts against terrorism. Musharraf said he did not understand why parts of Pakistan were called "safe havens" in the U.S. whereas "hideouts" would be a better description. Senator Durbin noted that the decision to rely on negotiations with tribal leaders to defeat extremism had not been successful and had apparently allowed extremists to regroup. Musharraf readily admitted that the agreement had failed but said he had been trying to minimize loss of life.

15. (S) Musharraf said the Army was being more proactive after the collapse of the tribal deal, but he was still trying to wean the population away from the extremists. The strategy in the tribal areas needed a combination of carrots and sticks. The Army had successfully targeted the Uzbeks, surrounded Mir Ali and also moved against specific extremists. Musharraf said the Pakistani Army had not yet encountered a target so important that the Pakistani Army could not handle it, but there were instances where the U.S. and Pakistan had attacked a target "together." Senator Durbin asked if they were taking all efforts to identify targets and act against them and invited the Ambassador to describe the help the USG might provide. In response, the Ambassador asked President Musharraf to receive Admiral Eric Olson, Commander of Special Operations Command (SOCOM), who would explain to him what specific types of support the U.S. might have available. Musharraf said he would be pleased to receive Admiral Olson and was always ready to cooperate more closely with the U.S.

16. (C) Senator Durbin asked if the Pakistani people drew a distinction between al-Qaeda and the Taliban. President Musharraf said they did. He said that some of the religious parties had a considerable following within the tribal areas,

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such as Fazlur Rehman with Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI-F), who has influence with the Taliban. He noted that some of the unrest was now spreading into the settled areas.

17. (C) Senator Durbin said he had heard discussion in Pakistan about negotiating with the Taliban, a proposal he certainly did not understand. Musharraf said there was a belief in Pakistan that this should be done by the Afghans. He said he was going to attend the Jirga in Afghanistan next week. He recounted the history of the Afghan war against the Soviets, which "had polluted our tribal agencies" with extremists. He said that the Taliban were entirely an Afghan phenomenon and originally had nothing to do with Pakistan. Now Pakistan was paying the price.

18. (C) Senator Durbin asked what kind of progress had been made in education, noting that investments in health and education were critical. Senator Durbin said he had met the Minister of Womens Affairs, Sumaira Malik, the night before and she was a very good representative of Pakistan. Senator Durbin said that he always evaluated a country by how they treated their women and he asked about the status of girls education. Musharraf replied that his government had passed the Womens' Protection Bill, the first legislation in years to move forward the rights of women.

19. (C) Musharraf said the government had enjoyed "partial success" against the religious schools. Not only had the Red Mosque and its associated religious school located in the center of Islamabad been shut down, but the government had also uncovered and closed another extremist mosque and religious school in an affluent area of the capital. They had banned foreign students from the religious schools and were moving forward to make the curriculum entirely transparent. There was also an ongoing debate with the religious "school boards" about examining the students. The government was planning to increase the number of schools at which the government would pay for room and board for girls and boys, since most students attended religious schools out of economic necessity. President Musharraf said these

schools were surprisingly drawing girls in even the most conservative areas of the country.

¶10. (C) President Musharraf in closing indicated his concern about the recent legislation (H.R. 1) which would condition Pakistan's assistance. (Comment: This legislation is widely misunderstood and incorrectly compared to the far more draconian Pressler amendment.) He said that Pakistan was fully committed to the war on terror and did not permit sanctuaries for terrorists.

¶11. (U) This cable was drafted after Senator Durbin departed Pakistan and he did not clear it.

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